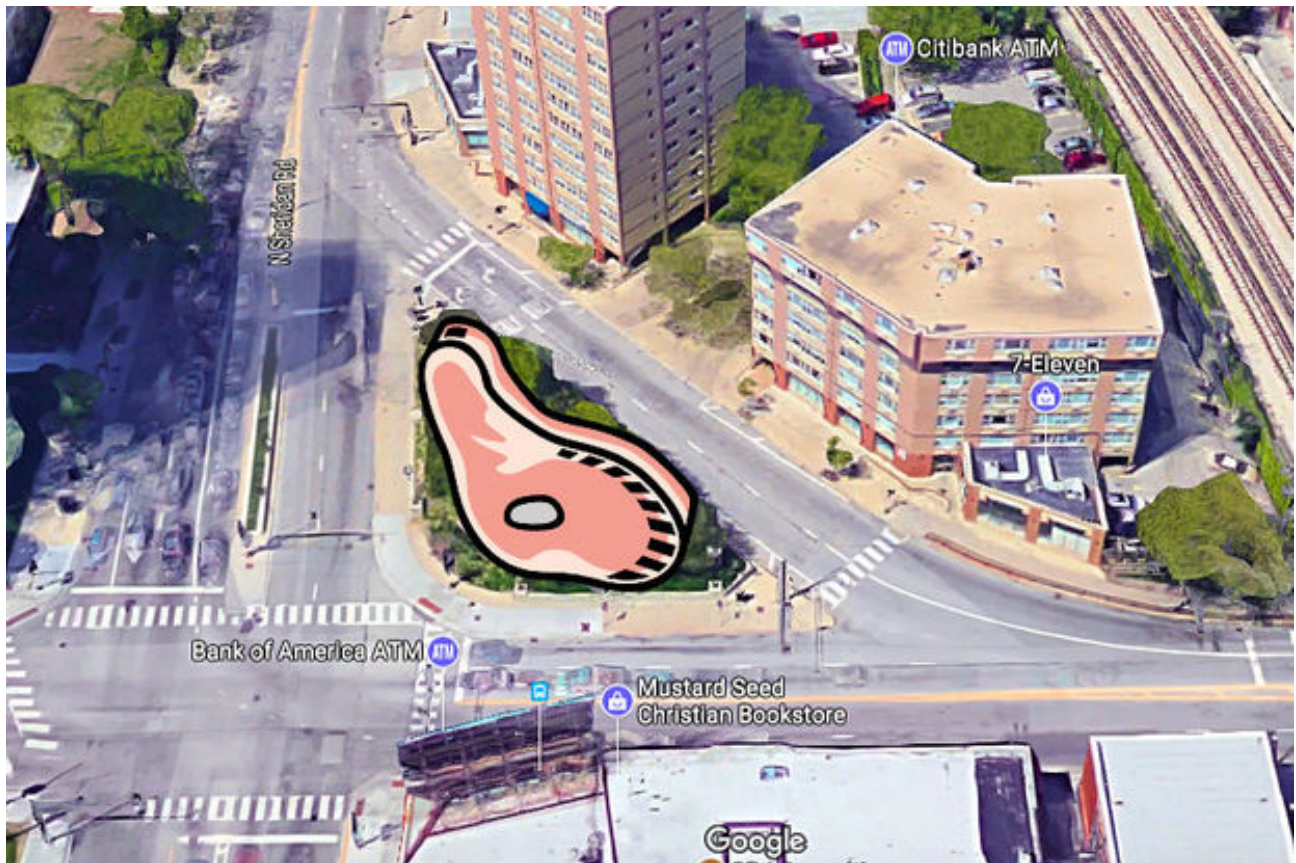


Is There A Pork Chop Island In Your 'Hood? Probably, And No It's Not Edible

 dnainfo.com/chicago/20171011/rogers-park/pork-chop-island-traffic-flow-right-turn-slip-lane



THE BLOCK CLUB a blog about Chicago neighborhoods



The intersection of Sheridan/Broadway/Devon in Rogers Park/Edgewater is a pork chop island, allowing cars heading north on Sheridan to continue on in the righthand lane.

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ROGERS PARK — Are pork chop islands all around Chicago? Maybe when pigs fly.

Actually, it's true — and no, it's not what sounds like the happiest place on Earth. It's a traffic term.

Those in the transportation sector use the moniker to describe raised, triangular islands that create a right-turn slip lane, meant to help slow turning traffic and make it easier for pedestrians to cross the street, according to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

Together from above, the shape of the triangular pedestrian refuge and curved right lane somewhat resemble the shape of, you guessed it — a pork chop.

Though it might sound confusing, once the type of intersection is clear it's easy to notice their frequency throughout the neighborhoods.

A highly-trafficked example is the intersection of North Broadway, Sheridan Road and Devon Avenue at the border of Rogers Park and Edgewater, where a sign welcoming people to Rogers Park stands.

The island sits on the northeast corner of the intersection, but a third road that allows northbound drivers on Sheridan to head north, rather than continue straight onto Devon, forms a curved third wall (the slip lane) of the triangle.

The concrete island between the roads provides a place for pedestrians to wait while they partially cross, and features an array of trees, shrubs and flowers.

Residents are even considering it as a site to place a new 16-foot sculpture by artist Davis McCarty as a way to further welcome visitors to the Far North Side.

But the effectiveness of pork chop islands is debatable.

In theory, the islands were designed help to "chop" up walkways into shorter distances, allowing walkers more time to cross, and cross one portion of wide intersections at a time. The raised intersections are also meant to improve sight lines for both drivers and pedestrians, according to the planning agency.

Still, it is an "obstruction" in the road that can make some aspects of street management more challenging, like plowing snow or cleaning leaves and debris. It can also be an unexpected thing to encounter for pedestrians who are visually impaired, according to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

And, though intended to slow down turning drivers, sometimes people use the opportunity to speed instead.

Though pork chop islands' chief responsibility is to serve as a safe place for pedestrians, they are actually being used less frequently and even some slip lanes have recently been removed in favor of safer ways to protect walkers and cyclists, according to Michael Claffey, a spokesman for the Chicago Department of Transportation.

"Where possible, [the city] has been looking to eliminate them in order to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and motorists; and to slow down motor vehicle turns, and to make intersections more compact," Claffey said.

At several intersections along Milwaukee Avenue, slip lanes have been removed, and other changes have been made at:

- Halsted/Broadway (concrete closure)
- Lincoln/Damen/Irving Park (concrete closure)
- Ashland/Milwaukee (paint/post)
- Damen/Milwaukee (paint/post)
- Lincoln/Paulina/Roscoe (proposed concrete)

Though one day soon Chicago's pork chop islands might be a thing of the past, for now they continue to play a part in keeping the city's streets sizzling.



A sculpture by artist Davis McCarty is being considered for placement at the southern entrance to the neighborhood, within a pork chop island. [Davis McCarty]